

**Stephen Adair: Report from the Faculty Advisory Committee to the Board of Regents  
To the Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee  
June 24, 2014**

Senator Casano, Representative Willis, and Members of the Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee, I am Stephen Adair, Professor of Sociology at Central Connecticut State University, and Chair of the Faculty Advisory Committee. I am honored and privileged to be here with many of my colleagues from the FAC to represent nearly 6000 faculty members serving over 90,000 students across the 17 institutions overseen by the Board of Regents.

**Faculty positions on the Board**

The FAC is grateful for your support in passing what is now Public Act 14-208. As of July 1, the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Faculty Advisory Committee will serve on the Board of Regents ensuring that both the community colleges and the state universities will have a representative voice.

The FAC's service on the Board began last October. Over these months, I believe that service has been instrumental in improving communication, collaboration, and transparency between faculty, the system administration, and the Board.

The FAC played an important role in resetting some of the priorities in Transform CSCU 2020. President Gray recently invited a faculty member to join the Executive Steering Committee for Transform, and a faculty member has been placed in a lead, managerial position role in the administration of Transform.

The FAC also recently proposed a system-wide conference on research, teaching and shared governance for next spring, which was enthusiastically supported by the system administration. Plans are now underway for the conference.

Partly due to the strength of the emerging collaboration, the FAC recently requested that the Board consider permitting faculty to have voting rights on some of the Board's subcommittees -- a position endorsed by the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges.

**Appropriations**

The FAC would also like to thank this committee for the additional appropriations allocated in this year's budget for the CSCU system.

The additional revenue reversed the long standing trend of the state contributing an ever smaller portion of the system's general operating expenses. Among other things, the appropriation provided needed support for the innovations in developmental education that include a variety of delivery systems and embedded support in credit bearing courses. It enabled the Board to keep tuition increases at a modest two percent. And it provided funds for the Go Back to Get Ahead program.

The FAC supports the Go Back to Get Ahead program. Job opportunities, the birth of a child, changing family responsibilities, and rising student debt can interfere with timely degree completion. We hope and expect that Go Back to Get Ahead will bring some of these students back who may only need a few more courses. Nevertheless -- as the Student Advisory Committee has also identified -- the program does raise a social justice issue as returning students receive a discount that is not available for students who persist.

With the additional appropriations, the FAC did encourage the administration to do what it could to move that tuition increase closer to zero. While two percent is modest and roughly equal to the rate of inflation, it only maintains the status quo, rather than reversing the trend that has seen escalating costs for students in both public and private higher education institutions across the country.

Amidst growing inequality, the scandalous mounting of student debt, and the enduring struggles that many households continue to face in the wake of the recent economic crisis, we need to find a way to hold the line on the cost of tuition.

### **Transform CSCU 2020 and faculty priorities**

Transform CSCU 2020 promises broad changes for the state universities, the community colleges and Charter Oak. We believe there is widespread support for an initiative grounded in the priorities of access, affordability and excellence and in which student learning and success remain at the core of our mission.

The FAC has identified five qualities of our academic mission that we believe should be emphasized as we bring change to our institutions. The five qualities are not intended as specific criticisms of any of the items on President Gray's list of 28 objectives for Transform, rather these are elaborations of what we have gathered from conversations with colleagues across our campuses. The FAC presented a similar list to the BOR in May.

#### **1. Promote economic growth and an educated citizenry; promote workforce development and a richer cultural life**

The FAC supports the development of technical programs tied to specific workforce needs. We support identifying and documenting the ways our institutions contribute to the economic growth of the state. We support the development of professional and vocational programs. We support faculty across the system who modify programs mindful of the skills and experiences that will launch students into successful careers.

Yet, the total value of a higher education ought not to be reduced to economic growth and the size of the salaries earned by our graduates. Our institutions also contribute to the richness of the state's cultural, social, and political life in ways that are less easily quantified. Just as importantly, improving literacy, numeracy, critical thinking, and imparting the knowledge and values of a liberal arts education are also necessary and vital job skills. A recent report from American Association of Colleges and Universities demonstrates that students who complete four-year degrees in liberal arts programs often find successful and well-paid careers on par with those who complete professional

programs.<sup>1</sup> The study also found that that in peak earning years (ages 56-60), those with liberal arts degrees earned more than those who completed a professional program.

Every time a report or document gets written or spoken that defines or limits our mission in terms of the economic health of the state or workforce development that does not include the other critical features of our mission creates a type of false choice that leaves many feeling unrepresented.

The FAC recognizes that many of our students, prospective students, the general public and, perhaps, many members of this committee are particularly interested in programs that promise economic growth and develop specific career skills. We support such programs as well, but also feel need to correct, rather than reinforce, a bias that leads to an unnecessary dichotomy.

## **2. The Role of on-line education.**

The FAC supports expansion of on-line education especially in graduate programs and in the development of programs that capture new markets and new students, who might be unable or unlikely to pursue higher education through traditional means. We do not recommend, however, replacing, substituting, or transitioning traditional course offerings to on-line course offerings. Several large-scale and comprehensive studies comparing on-line courses with on the ground courses have been recently conducted by Community College Research Center (CCRC) at Columbia University. They have found that, “While all types of students in the study suffered decrements in performance in online courses, some struggled more than others to adapt: males, younger students, Black students, and students with lower grade point averages.”<sup>2</sup>

## **3. Maintain the separate missions of the community colleges, the state universities, and Charter Oak**

When the Board of Regents was established in 2011, this legislature was clear in its intent that the separate missions of the community colleges, the state universities, and Charter Oak should remain distinct. Among faculty, there is overwhelming support to maintain those separate missions. We recognize and appreciate efforts to integrate and align our distinct functions through TAP or other policies, but that appreciation does not extend to a vision of a common catalog, or to an integration with 17 branch campuses becoming part of a single institution.

## **4. Increase the Proportion of Courses Taught by Full-Time Faculty**

Over recent years, we have continued to see steady increases in the number of courses taught by part-time faculty. While adjunct faculty are able and dedicated teachers, this increase puts further strain on the functions of full-time faculty in serving as student mentors and advisors, in designing and assessing curricula, in engaging in research and scholarship, and in participating in its governance responsibilities.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.aacu.org/leap/nchems/index.cfm>

<sup>2</sup> Xu, Di and Shanna Smitt Jaggars. 2013. “Adaptability to Online Learning: Differences Across Types of Students and Academic Subject Areas.” CCRC Working Paper No. 54. February 2013.  
<http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/adaptability-to-online-learning.pdf>

In a recent BCG report, the authors wrote that to reduce costs “colleges and universities are relying on a core of full-time research professors who are supported by a part-time teaching staff.”<sup>3</sup> While we question whether this would be a viable long-term strategy at a research university, in our institutions we believe increasing the use of part-time faculty would reduce our capacity to advance our mission.

## **5. Curriculum planning must remain at the campus level**

The FAC endorses the TAP policy and is eager to see it move forward in the months ahead. Once completed, the TAP framework and the major pathways will provide transparent academic directions to students across Connecticut that will reduce costs to students and the state by ensuring that students are not taking credits that they do not need. We need to allow students to move across our institutions with greater transparency. TAP, however, still has its complications and will require excellent academic advising. Effective pedagogy requires that faculty on each campus be able to design their own programs based on the expertise of their colleagues and their assessment of student learning. The differences between programs across the system are a source of strength, innovation, and academic vitality, but it does create some complexity for transferring students.

In moving forward with Transform CSCU 2020, innovations need to be effective solutions to real problems. We certainly can improve the quality of education and increase student success, but new innovations should build on the strengths already in place. Amidst all the turmoil since the merger of our system, faculty have been working hard and achieving considerable success transforming the state of Connecticut, one student at a time.

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<sup>3</sup> Henry, Tyce, Ernesto Pagano, J. Puckett and Joanne Wilson. 2014. “Five Trends to Watch in Higher Education,” Boston Consulting Group, April 2014, p.11.  
[https://www.bcgperspectives.com/content/articles/education\\_public\\_sector\\_five\\_trends\\_watch\\_higher\\_education/](https://www.bcgperspectives.com/content/articles/education_public_sector_five_trends_watch_higher_education/)

## Appendix

The members and contact information for the Faculty Advisory Committee (alternates have the rights and responsibilities of full members, except they can only vote when the regular member is absent):

Stephen Adair, Chair, CCSU, [adairs@ccsu.edu](mailto:adairs@ccsu.edu)

Robert Brown, Vice Chair, TxCC [rbrown@tunxis.edu](mailto:rbrown@tunxis.edu) (representing the medium Community Colleges: include CCC, HCC, TRCC, TxCC)

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### **Alternates:**

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William Lugo, ECSU [lugow@easternct.edu](mailto:lugow@easternct.edu) (alternate for CSU faculty for 2014)

Barbara Richards, HCC, [brichards@housatonic.edu](mailto:brichards@housatonic.edu) (alternate for medium CCs for 2014 and 2015)

Kim Shea, GCC, [kshea@gatewayct.edu](mailto:kshea@gatewayct.edu) (alternate for administrative faculty for 2014 and 2015)

Judy Wallace, MXCC, [jwallace@mxcc.edu](mailto:jwallace@mxcc.edu) (alternate for small CCs for 2014 and 2015)